

# Maine Dental Association

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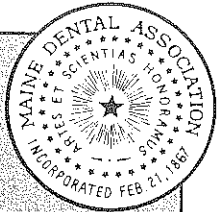
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A Constituent of the  
American Dental  
Association



December 11, 2012

Ms. Mary Mayhew, Commissioner  
Maine Department of Health and Human Services  
11 State House Station  
Augusta, Maine 04333

Dear Commissioner Mayhew:

The Maine Dental Association congratulates the MaineCare Redesign Task Force for the effort it has put into the Recommendations Report recently promulgated for comment. The report takes a hard look at the MaineCare system and proposes many thoughtful steps.

The MDA was not part of the review process but we want to comment on the dental components of MaineCare. As the committee rightly concluded, it is less expensive to keep the adult dental component in the MaineCare system. It is more efficient, and significantly less costly, to have dentists treat MaineCare members who present with extreme dental pain or eminent tooth loss, the two procedures allowed to be performed on adults under the program.

It is more efficient because emergency departments cannot do more than palliative treatment of the patient, using antibiotics to knock down infections and painkillers to reduce suffering. Ultimately, a dentist is needed to perform the treatments required as they are beyond the scope or skill of medical doctors or nurse practitioners and if that doesn't happen the MaineCare member is likely to return to the ED several times until the patient is either admitted or the tooth is removed.

It is less expensive because the cost of dental treatment under MaineCare about \$100-125 while emergency room time runs into hundreds of dollars for each visit, and untreated dental pain can cause several trips to the ED.

In closing, Dr. Robert Berube, Vice President of the MDA is talking with the Maine Hospital Association, the Maine Medical Association and members of your Care Management staff. He is discussing Community Care Coordinators and how to create ways to encourage MaineCare adults to seek dental care rather than ED care for dental pain. We will also be encouraging more dentists to become MaineCare providers, increasing their participation from the current 52% of practitioners.

Sincerely

*Michelle Mazur-Kary DDS, MPH*

Dr. Michelle Mazur-Kary, DDS, MPH  
President